Interview with Richard L. Stockman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

RICHARD L. STOCKMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is October 12, 1993 and we are talking in of all places Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and I am talking to Richard L. Stockman. Dick we start off these interviews by asking about your background, something about your parents and where you grew up.

STOCKMAN: My home of origin was Kansas City, Missouri. I was born in October, 1940. My parents were both of German origin. My mother's maternal name was Kaiser. Most of the knowledge I have about her family was that they had lived in and around Kansas City most of her memory, whereas my father by contrast had come from the typical German immigrant group, who had migrated to the States about 1850. According to the records, they went to Philadelphia and then three of the four brothers moved to the Mid West and bought a farm in Glasgow, Missouri. Somehow, some way they met, married and that was the start of my life, the first of eight children.

Q: Now you grew up one of eight children and one could safely say in a Catholic family?

STOCKMAN: That's a good assumption.

Q: Where did you go school?

STOCKMAN: I attended a parochial school which was simply across the street in our old neighborhood, a typical, blue collar working class family.

Q: What was your father doing?

STOCKMAN: My father was by trade basically a salesman . He had worked in all types of sales and settled down into the delivery of bakery goods door to door in which he succeeded pretty well. That career was broken up by two or three years in the Navy during the Second World War when I was a child.

Q: And then you went on to school after parochial school?

STOCKMAN: Yes, I completed one year of high school in Kansas city and then due to the influence of my very staunch Catholic mother and an uncle who was an ordained priest and served his first year in China in 1948-49, I thought I wanted to follow in his footsteps and therefore went to Cape Girardeau , Missouri, where the Vincentian Fathers has their minor seminary and on to their major seminary in Perryville, Missouri between Cape Girardeau and St. Louis. DePaul University in Chicago and St. John's University in New York are both institutions founded by the Vincentian Fathers. I stayed with that for about nine years until about 1962.

Q: This would have covered both high school and university?

STOCKMAN: Yes, a total of nine years in that environment.

Q: You must have been ready to be ordained weren't you?

STOCKMAN: No, actually I was shy four years of theology. I had completed the course in philosophy and the minor, ironically, was in education. Then I realized that my education was going to be out of the classroom and around the world. After leaving the seminary there was one brief year, not quite a year, of transition in which I taught in a Catholic

elementary school, but was drafted into the Service in 1963, in the fall. I served most of my Army time in communications on Rhein Main Air Base in Germany.

Q: This is 1963 to when?

STOCKMAN: 1965.

Q: How did you get into communications?

STOCKMAN: In those days it was prerequisite at State that one have prior military service particularly for those interested in communications, prior military communications experience. Therefore I was more than qualified.

Q: This is my first interview with somebody in the communications field. Remember this is an unclassified interview, but I would like to get a feel of how things were done. What was your impression of the state of communications that you were dealing with in the military? We will then contrast it later on.

STOCKMAN: In the military, as one can easily imagine, the government had thousands of young people to choose from and after a screening process a cadre of people would be selected and put into the communications schooling, etc. The experience and education one received was of course basic and fundamental in the beginning. The longer one stayed in, of course, the more experience one acquired. This overall communications experience was quite solid. It certainly was a good foundation to make a transition into the civilian side of government in those days. In my opinion any way, I think the service experience was more than acceptable to qualify for a position at State, but it was not intelligently used. After the recruitment process and coming on board, the assignment process, was a real disappointment. Keep in mind in those days we are talking about post-Cuba...

Q: We are talking about the Cuban crisis of 1962.

STOCKMAN: Yes. Kennedy, of course, was assassinated shortly thereafter. The state of affairs at State in communications was, as everyone knows from history, a fiasco. Kennedy was waiting on word from Cuba through our facilities and he simply didn't get it. And what he did get, apparently, was not what he wanted to hear.

Q: I heard Dobrynin talk at Georgetown and say that one of the critical messages was sent by Western Union, which arrived by an elderly gentleman who delivered the message and had no idea what he was doing.

STOCKMAN: I can't vouch for that. but things were extremely fundamental in those days.

Q: Was this a contrast as to how things were with the military?

STOCKMAN: Yes, I think so. The military, of course, had a huge budget and was geared up for both strategic type operations and mobility. They were very flexible and could do almost anything they wanted, in contrast with a civilian agency or even an agency like State which had not really dedicated many of its resources in a serious way to communications. It was very fledgling in those days.

Q: Well, let's go to the recruitment and then come back to it. What got you into State?

STOCKMAN: That is a very convoluted story in itself. I had always dreamt, in my younger days, to kind of emulate both my father and my uncle, the one who had gone to China for one brief year. I had always been fascinated by travel and wanted to do this all of my life. Of course my first taste of this travel was compliments of Uncle Sam to Germany. So when I got out of the service my first interest was with the airlines because I thought that was the easiest way to accomplish that goal. Unfortunately in those days, TWA with whom I was hired in Kansas City went on strike very shortly after I started in the spring of 1963. I had a near fatal car accident with my family in it as well, which influenced my decision. I almost lost my assignment to State because I delayed reporting to Washington. What really influenced me, I think, was the fact that TWA was going on strike and I needed

employment and income. It was accidental, coincidental, that a good friend with whom I worked at TWA told me about interviewers in Kansas City.

Q: So they were coming out?

STOCKMAN: Yes, they were actually going out looking for individuals with prior military service. The reason they were doing this I honestly believe is that prior to this time State communicators, most positions were probably held by senior women exclusively as a result of World War II. Therefore they were looking down the road a bit, post-Cuba, and realized they had to broaden their base in recruitment.

Q: There must have been a tremendous emphasis on security. This was the height of the Cold War, there had been some real problems in the communications field. How did you find the clearance business?

STOCKMAN: Well I thought in those days, quite honestly, that the security clearing procedure was quite thorough and in depth. Subsequently when one realizes the difficulty of doing this the proper way, I really thought they did a remarkably quick job of clearing one. I basically interviewed in February, 1963 and was hired on July 5 of that year. So the whole process took four or five months only.

Q: That's not bad. What about training when you came in? Was there a different way to communicate? Were you learning something different than the military or was it just "Here is your radio, take over," or something?

STOCKMAN: Well that probably was the most disappointing part of the beginning of the career. I think the assignment process basically was pretty much driven by the Bureau of Personnel more than the Office of Communications. In other words, one was accepted based on the qualifications if one passed all of the hurdles and examinations and eventually got into the training. Most of us knew as we began the training courses where we were going in advance. Posts were categorized by their importance or type

of operations. For example, category A, B, C, and D. My first assignment was to Rio de Janeiro. The training in relation to the job, I thought, was adequate, but it certainly would not begin to compare with the very professional training facilities we have today, either in content or in method or duration. It was very superficial, not very professional, to be perfectly honest.

Q: Sort of patched together?

STOCKMAN: Yes. There was more actually, I believe, learning on the job then there was in classroom training.

Q: What about equipment? I have been a Foreign Service officer for 30 years and have no feel for the equipment at all because usually I was kept out of the room and didn't try to get in there. We are talking about the 1960s. Were they beginning to upgrade things?

STOCKMAN: If I were to compare the first tour, an assignment in Rio de Janeiro, with today, I would have to say that the equipment, even for its day, was probably a major upgrade from what was commonly used in places like Cuba or other hot spots around the world. However it was very time consuming process. Yes, there was that mystique about the whole operation. There was certainly by today's standards an unhealthy isolation of communications, for security reasons, I suppose, from the rest of the diplomatic community within our own embassies.

Q: In some ways I felt that this was counterproductive because communicators often seemed to be lonely people and possibly more susceptible to being taken over by an intelligence service because they were sort of pushed to one side.

STOCKMAN: I think you are absolutely right in reaching that conclusion because ironically those who were thought to be more vulnerable and susceptible to human interest contact penetration perhaps were put into that position by the very stupidity of that policy. Instead

of integrating individuals into the community in a very educated manner, they were to some extent deliberately kept isolated.

Q: Okay. You went to Rio, you went there in 1966 and served until 1968 there. How were you received when you got there? You were married at this point?

STOCKMAN: No I arrived in Rio very much single. I had virtually broken up a potential marriage by going into the Foreign Service. But the acceptance by staff and personnel in Rio I thought was a very warm reception. Keep in mind that in those days, at least at the large embassies, the administrative cone as we know it today basically had pretty large sections. The communications section was equal in size to the B&F section. There was a form of sponsorship for new arrivals. Needless to say the Brazilian people were very hospitable.

Q: In 1966 where was our embassy, in Rio?

STOCKMAN: Yes, it was still located in Rio. Within that two-year time frame that I served, the movement had been started to relocate to Brasilia.

Q: From your perspective, was what the political environment in Rio at that time?

STOCKMAN: That was a very interesting introduction, I think, to the Foreign Service, certainly far superior to any classroom education one might get. Those were the days, of course, that were bordering on organized terrorism. There was certainly roots of it in Brazil which our US military establishment and other programs we had were directed at eradicating. Unfortunately, I think many of our efforts were misguided in the sense that had there been any attempt to try to successfully eradicate the poverty, the lack of education, and health situation, the roots of terrorism would have also been eradicated. But the political environment was basically a very hostile one there. There was polarization between the military, who had basically run the government pretty successfully, with civilians subordinate to them, and the malcontents who wanted to be in power. And there

was trouble in the streets most of the two years. The students were very much activists like they were in the States.

Q: Tell me, from the perspective of a communicator, you are sending all these things back and forth, did you find that you really had a chance to get a feel for what was happening or were you so busy just transmitting words?

STOCKMAN: I think you have truly hit the nail on the head. For better or worse, I think many times that the communicators are given far more credit as being vulnerable targets of intelligence penetration than is rightly the case, for the very reason you pointed out. The overwhelming amount of work and the method in which it was done honestly didn't permit one to read every word. To really fully understand what one was doing would have required a lot more time than we had available to us. And yet, there were certainly ways in which one could acquire a lot of information, knowledge of what was going on, once you realized who the key people in the embassy were. For example, Frank Carlucci was a young, bright Foreign Service officer there, executive officer, and Vernon Walters was the Defense Attach#. I don't think I have to explain those two names.

Q: Were you picking up a basic rivalry between them at that time?

STOCKMAN: Oh definitely. There was no question about it. The military establishment was very much feeling its oats in those days. We were right in the middle of Vietnam. They were certainly challenging the civilian part of our government I think in Brazil. After all Vernon Walters could walk right into Castelo Branco's office, the President of Brazil who was a wartime buddy.

Q: Castelo Branco's had been with the Brazilian Division in Italy, part of the Fifth Army.

STOCKMAN: That is right. I suppose it was a healthy rivalry between the two because it certainly was competitive. It made both groups understand what was going on. But as we know from the last 30 years or so of history, quite frequently there are very distinct

points of view. I suppose the prevailing thought is the one that presents the best case that eventually gets the President's ear, depending on the top spokesman in Washington.

Q: Did the military have their own communications or did they use yours?

STOCKMAN: They relied exclusively upon the Embassy.

Q: Again, this is an unclassified interview, but we are talking about times gone past, CIA did their own business, is that correct?

STOCKMAN: I don't know what arrangements they had, to tell you the truth. I was unaware of what they were doing.

Q: So often one has the feeling that the CIA goes off and does its thing and maybe the Ambassador knows and maybe the Ambassador doesn't. Who was the Ambassador at that time?

STOCKMAN: The ambassador at that time was Tuthill.

Q: Jack Tuthill.

STOCKMAN: Yes. You probably know him better than I. He came out of the European area.

Q: He had this program that was called Operation Top Seek which was trying to reduce the size of our embassy, which he claimed had grown just like Topsy. How did this impact on the communication section?

STOCKMAN: I think it impacted in several ways. I think your question is “Would we be able to carry our workload and still reduce the work force?” In actual fact before I had left in 1968 the planning of this Topsy Operation had been pushed forward to a certain point where positions within the communications room were already identified for reduction.

What types of positions? Well, they were truly luxury by today's standards. There was a messenger or two who literally drove around the streets of Rio delivering message traffic to USAID, the Peace Corps, etc. The only operation inside the embassy at that time was USIS. The others had their own separate buildings in Rio and were huge operations, particularly USAID.

What other impact? Well, I think it did consume a great deal of his time in planning this and convincing Washington that this situation had gotten out of hand. Certainly he had the classic example of a huge bureaucracy of federal employees in Rio. The very attempt to move the operation to Brasilia put just that much more focus on who was essential and who wasn't. And needless to say I think that was the beginning of downsizing, at least of State in a big time way.

Q: Were you well accepted in Rio?

STOCKMAN: Well, the embassy was such a large operation there that quite honestly there was very little embassy social life to which we were invited. Perhaps one or two occasions a year. I recall one reception where astronauts were there. They were celebrities in those days. That would be one example. Perhaps Thanksgiving and an occasional function of a dignitary.

Q: It was such a big embassy.

STOCKMAN: Yes, and the Ambassador's residence was not all that large for entertaining. Of course a tour or two later at smaller embassies that issue did very much come to the forefront because everyone was needed and asked to contribute. One also understood the Foreign Service a lot better. Plus the working hours were more compatible with a little bit of social life.

Q: In Rio were you pretty much on call a lot?

STOCKMAN: Well, our operation there was basically divided into two or three segments. What I call the heart and soul of the operation, namely the telegraphic division, there were simply three of us on rotation duty the whole period even though it was staffed by about ten people. The bureaucracy made newcomers pay their dues. Three of us did that, including the carnival time.

Q: Was this a waste? Isn't there a way of sort of keeping on top of things that things are really going to happen?

STOCKMAN: Well, one would think so depending upon one's position and how much of this telegraphic traffic you would have access to. You know very well from your own career as you advanced in position and importance you increasingly saw more and more of everyone's telegraphic traffic. Well, you can imagine within the communication section where you handle all of it, in and out going, the workloads were certainly very demanding. The methods of reproduction, transmission, all of these things, were extremely cumbersome.

Q: When you talk about reproduction, what are you talking about?

STOCKMAN: Well, basically whether you have an incoming or outgoing telegram there is a distribution pattern on that telegram. In this day and age, of course, we have these high speed reproduction facilities like Xerox, but in those days you had a huge US AID operation, a building of its own, six or seven stories of a bank building and hundreds of copies of telegrams were required.

Q: So it is just reproduction of paper. There was the thermafax and horrible ways of producing copies.

STOCKMAN: I forget what they called the method, but it consisted of a rotating drum with this terrible liquid. Unfortunately we didn't have a clothing allowance because you needed one on account of this purple dye. It was just a very rudimentary printing press operation.

We actually needed messengers to distribute this stuff internally within the embassy and outside the building to other US offices.

When you move on down the road to later assignments, well, of course, a smaller US embassy would all be self-contained. People would come to the communication center to pick up. But the introduction of the Xerox at least in most of the places where I was, did not really take hold until the early 1970s. No one could afford those things.

Q: But at least, from what I gather, although you were kept under rather strict working hours, you were able to get yourself a bride.

STOCKMAN: Well, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. With a liberal arts background in the seminary I had always had an interest in languages. I felt very strongly that one can not enjoy the benefits of a Foreign Service career without making a bona fide attempt to learn languages. I deliberately chose not to date girls within the embassy so that I could learn the language, and I think I succeeded within six months. Obviously I found a fianc#e of my choice and understood enough to say, “I do.” The Brazilian people were very enjoyable and hospitable. The life after work there in Rio was never a problem. That was a city that was eternally ticking. One could work any shift, and we had three shifts around the clock, and you could always go out and find a restaurant open and entertainment. Life was typical of a tropical assignment. The Brazilians were much Latin in that respect. A great tour.

Q: Then, I take it you were all set for the Foreign Service?

STOCKMAN: I was sold.

Q: I have you coming back to the Department from 1969-70. What were you doing?

STOCKMAN: In those days one of the natural consequences or penalty, so to speak, that we had to pay if we married a foreign spouse.

Q: You came back to get her nationalized?

STOCKMAN: That is right. Again life is filled with many ironies. Withholding or withdrawing security clearances, one could only work in certain positions in the Department. I seemed to have lucked out and was assigned to the African Bureau and worked on the Nigerian Desk during the Nigerian Civil War.

Q: The Biafran War.

STOCKMAN: It was totally out of cone, so to speak, but to tell you the truth I saw far more sensitive material on that desk without the clearance.

Q: What was your impression because I think this is a very interesting war? Our policy was essentially, if Africa starts splitting up all hell will break loose because of all the tribal boundaries and we had better stick to the boundaries as they are, imperfect as they may seem. Yet there were an awful lot of attacks on this policy, particularly from the intellectuals and the glamour people, etc., that you should do something for the Biafrans. What were you getting as you were dealing with this thing?

STOCKMAN: It was very interesting because I had served a short TDY in Lom#, Togo prior to this assignment on the African desk in Washington and one of the things that I learned while in Lom# was that Ambassador Albert Sherer was wearing two hats. One of which was to go up to San Fernando Po, a little island, where a lot of humanitarian international airlifts were taking off into Biafra. Consequently there were really two points of view about this war and I do believe that most of the African specialists, who were serving on the desk, were very pro-Biafran. The lobbyist, etc. and the whole Washington scene were very clever.

Q: They were very strong in Congress. They had some people...there was one man in particular who was a congressional assistant.

STOCKMAN: Well, they were the intelligentsia of Nigeria, the Ebos. But you wonder some times looking at history today and the terrible mess there is in Nigeria, was that course of action justified. Should we not have lobbied a little stronger and maybe things would have been different today. Who knows?

Q: I think the policy has been, and it is a little hard not to go along with it, that once you start saying, "Okay, if a rebellion starts, we will maybe support the rebellion," the whole place will absolutely dissolve.

STOCKMAN: Well, you know, I think from a historical perspective over the last 20-30 years, if you look at most West African countries, or even go a bit further north, all the way from Senegal on down the coast, in nine out of ten cases the military were so corrupt and once the colonial powers had left, things disintegrated to a terrible mess in most every case. The whole infrastructure collapsed, they were greedy, corrupt and certainly didn't develop their countries.

Q: They are still there pretty much today.

STOCKMAN: So, who knows. I guess the African Bureau was not unlike most of the other bureaus where everybody was a specialist and if you recall one of Kissinger's top priorities was to break up these specialty groups and make everyone a generalist, for better or worse.

Q: And then you finally broke out of the Department and got yourself off to Tegucigalpa, Honduras from 1970-71.

STOCKMAN: That was the supreme irony again of this whole personnel policy, security policy, etc. Specialists like communicators are a supply and demand commodity. You can't run an embassy very effectively without them. You impose penalties on them but suddenly you realize you are short handing yourself. It was a Catch 22, this five-year waiting period for a foreign spouse was quickly reduced to two years and I was hurried into the field. In

fact, I was even asked to take an African assignment, little did they realize that the left hand had said stay here and the right hand had said we want you in Africa. So it was not a very well throughout policy and I think they dropped it. The intent was sincerely good in that they did want the foreign spouses to become orientated to US living. It was good for them to have an introduction, after all they were to be representatives of the United States government in some fashion. In many cases many of these wives had come from wealthy, influential families and certainly could make a great contribution quickly. I think the policy overall was basically good. Certainly it would be scrutinized very carefully for foreign spouses behind the iron curtain. In fact, I think it was prohibited and with good reason. There are pros and cons but around four or five years after I was married they dropped many of those conditions. In fact, I don't believe foreign spouses have to become US citizens today. Personally I think that is wrong, I think they should be American citizens.

Q: What was the situation in Honduras in 1970-71?

STOCKMAN: The situation was honestly very depressing. We had turned down an assignment in Panama. Our motivation, quite frankly at the time was that we thought we could recover somewhat financially after a tour in Washington, by taking a hardship posting. The local scene there was abject poverty that one found literally on your doorstep. It was the classic example of a banana republic, so to speak, raped, robbed and pillaged by US industry and left in that condition. What the US industry did not take, the local military did. So there was virtually nothing left except a bankrupt country in debt to US banks up to their necks. It was virtually impossible to change anything in terms of constructive US policy that would improve the situation. Greediness and corruption, starting with the President's own wife there who would take funds out of charity organizations for her own purposes, was rampant.

There was one interesting incident that happened while we were there which shows you how things can happen with an intended design. You recall those hijackings of airplanes in the US at the time?

Q: Yes.

STOCKMAN: They were internal operations, mostly for money and these guys would jump out of the back of these 727s. One of those originated in the States and several weeks later it turned out that he was Honduran by nationality. He eventually turned himself into the US Embassy in the middle of the night, after months and weeks of searching for him. He turned himself in only because he was scared to death that the local people would catch him. He had distributed the money, he claimed, as he made his way down to Honduras, to poor people. Well the local military, of course, were just anxious to get their hands on him for obvious reasons, they wanted the money. So he walked in after weeks and months of attempts to identify him. He looked nothing like the sketches the FBI had. We took him back on a Defense Attach# plane.

We were going to make a round robin tour of all the countries, we were allowed to do that occasionally with them. We could visit every country except El Salvador because of the soccer war between those two countries.

There were horror stories of the campesinos massacring people out in the countryside for whatever reasons, political, revenge. There were outright murders in the city at night. There were selected bombings of US offices while we were there. It was a little turbulent and it was a little scary from time to time.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

STOCKMAN: I think the Ambassador was Hewson Ryan, from USIA.

Q: What was the atmosphere of the Embassy as far as you were concerned?

STOCKMAN: Not atypical of Central American embassies. It was a huge US AID operation more than anything else. I quite frankly have utterly no respect for that organization. It is a very harsh criticism, but it is a bureaucracy in its own right that in my

opinion accomplished very, very little constructive. There is a lot of propaganda, a lot of smoke blowing, but you don't see results. Never did in any of the countries where I served.

Q: Well, then you moved from this not exactly heaven on earth to Singapore from 1971-73. Now that must have been a pleasant contrast.

STOCKMAN: Well, it was for several reasons. The way the assignment came about was not exactly what we hoped for. My intent in those days, we were allowed to start bidding on assignments if you recall...democracy had set in in the assignment process...and I thought it would be a good idea to pick a Far Eastern assignment, one that was English speaking...and we had either Australia or New Zealand in mind...because it would help my wife improve her English and keep her in that environment. Latin America, of course, would throw her right back into her previous environment. We made the bids and Singapore was the result. It was very welcome for us.

Q: Was it an embassy at that time?

STOCKMAN: Yes, it was.

Q: What was the situation in Singapore?

STOCKMAN: At that point in time in my young career and family life, it was probably the beginning of what I considered the real education in the real world. Keep in mind in those days we were very, very much into Vietnam and Singapore was more than instrumental in this picture. Singapore, of course, was ruled by the one and only Lee Kuan Yew with his mission to set up the ideal city state. By all criteria I think even at that point he was very successful in doing the impossible. It was quite a contrast in living styles, of course, coming from Honduras to Singapore where you could almost eat off the streets. Our second son was born there and it was ideal for us for raising a family. Education was available. But we really did not get to know a lot of the people like we hoped to. We did get to know a few of the neighbors in our neighborhood. People, of course, other than

a few Embassy officers, basically lived in large apartments. We had a detached house which was pretty nice and my wife got to know more people, I believe, than I did. However, professional people, dentists, doctors, etc. were very accommodating and we would invite them home from time to time. It was interesting to hear the local people talk about their conditions there. They were obviously a highly educated people, I think sophisticated by Far East standards. But they were a very regimented people. One of the sad things that one could see was the intense stress and pressure put on young people in this competitive world that they valued and treasured so much. It was not uncommon to hear of young suicides in those days. So I think it did tell you something about this stress that a city state could create.

Congestion? Yes, there was a lot of that. It was an island of about 10 by 24 miles in length, I think. The US military presence there was more or less isolated on one end of the island and it was all in support of Vietnam. Lee Kuan Yew made it very clear that by no stretch was he going to let Singapore become a Hong Kong with all of its overtures. He certainly wanted his country and State to become a financial center and hoped to replace Hong Kong some day in that role. Who knows what will happen as we approach the reversion of Hong Kong to the Mainland in 1997.

But it was a very enjoyable assignments. The weather was almost overbearing with the humidity and the heat.

The Embassy, itself, was not large. It was constantly supporting VIP trips because it was a convenient stop off..

Q: It was good for shopping. Who was the Ambassador?

STOCKMAN: You know, I have a difficult time recalling who the Ambassador was. I don't know why, unless it is because we seldom saw him. Incredibly enough it was not staffed nearly as well as you would have thought Singapore would be in that particular time frame.

It was by most standards a small embassy. The foreign service nationals equaled, if not out numbered us. It kind of told you the importance of Singapore in our scale of things.

Q: Were there any communications problems being in a place like that? You were pretty far away from everything.

STOCKMAN: I think it was the classic example of an operation that was difficult to staff. The actual physical conditions, the working environment, was pathetic. We were crammed into a cubbyhole at the top of the three story building. We were pretty much restricted in what we were allowed to do in terms of operations. The level, sophistication of the equipment was a real disappointment. I would classify it as an info type post rather than an action type post. It was a place that accepted a lot of visitors. For some reasons the communications office there had a lot of difficulty and hardship. People suffered illnesses. The fellow I replaced lost a son there from encephalitis, the mosquito bred disease. A lady had a real serious problem and had to leave prematurely. The morale was not too good.

Q: Then you went from what on the surface would have sounded like a very nice place, but so often that isn't the case on the job. What about your next one that doesn't sound like a very nice place, Lom#, Togo from 1973-75?

STOCKMAN: If I can go back to Singapore just briefly, one of the reasons was that Singapore was a terribly expensive place, including the housing. There was no furniture program and staff people did not live well there. We were not permitted to drive left-hand cars, etc. Therefore, I thought in our young family life it would still be possible to take one more semi-hardship tour. It was an opportunity for me to bid on a place that was very key to a sophisticated technical operation we were going to do there and I wanted to be there when it happened. After discussing it with my wife we agreed, we lobbied for it and we got the assignment and enjoyed it very, very much. I think she got her real first taste of good Foreign Service life there.

Q: What was the situation in Togo in those days?

STOCKMAN: Well, politically Togo was quickly becoming one of the last bastions of freedom in West Africa that had survived the post colonial period when most of the European dominance and presence started to disappear. The British were virtually gone except for some influence in Nigeria. The French were there but behind the scenes commercially more than anything else. The Germans had disappeared. So therefore the President of Togo, Eyadema, was President for life in his own right. He certainly was no model of human rights causes or a pusher in that direction. I think the role of the US embassy there, as small as it was, was vastly more important in relation to its size than most people could appreciate. By that I mean there was a very large North Korean and Russian presence there.

Q: This, of course was of great concern to us during the Cold War.

STOCKMAN: Absolutely. If you recall in those days the Civil War and the takeover of Angola and a large Cuban presence there; the same thing in Ghana and on down the line it went. In other words, I think a lot of people truly feared there would be a domino effect in Africa. Certainly there was evidence of it starting to happen. So the only way I believe that the importance of Togo got on the map was some very shrewd appointments of US Ambassadors there. One was Nancy Rawls, one of the first female ambassadors who had risen up through the ranks; followed by Ronald Palmer, who was very astute and articulate.

Q: He was there when you were there?

STOCKMAN: Yes.

Q: I had a long interview with him on Togo.

STOCKMAN: So you can appreciate how dynamic he is. He was a great person to work for. I don't think there was one individual in that embassy, male or female, who did not surely appreciate his liveliness, his dynamic spirit. And he was very successful there. He actually was, I guess, in competition for the Deputy Assistant Secretary that Richard Moose was eventually awarded. I think he was somewhat disappointed that he didn't get it, of course and probably would have done very well.

Q: We are talking about under the Carter Administration which is a little later...1977.

STOCKMAN: Right.

Q: How were communications in Togo?

STOCKMAN: Like I had mentioned, one of the reasons that I wanted to go there so badly was...the State Department had looked over the entire situation and realized that we were quickly getting into a no-win situation on communications. You have one country not getting along with the next...keep in mind that we rely very heavily on commercial leased lines to do most of our communications...and we could see that that was not going to succeed very well, in fact it was becoming almost impossible to maintain communications in a lot of embassies. So they made a decision that they were going to go with a radio communication operation and that was my background in the military and therefore it was quite natural that I would be interested in getting back into that type of operation. Little did I realize before I got there, however, that Lom# and all the equipment earmarked for Lom# was suddenly transshipped into Luanda, in Angola. Unfortunately six weeks after it arrived there and got installed, it fell to the rebels and we lost everything. So that put Lom# far back on the priority list and most of the motivation that I had for being there was kind of lost. I didn't know all of the reasons but I started to piece it together. But I did establish a very good working contact with the French manager of French Cable, the communications department there.

Q: Well, we depended on lines.

STOCKMAN: Well, it was a combination there. We would transmit in a very primitive fashion our communications, we called it off line, to the central office in Lom#, through the French facilities and then they would get it back to Paris which was a very big relay point for many, many African posts in those days. They had a huge operation out of Paris. One could spend hours there doing this work. It was extremely tedious and kind of redundant in the manner in which we did it and very time consuming. There were long days and short nights most of that tour. But we extended six months. We thoroughly enjoyed the social life. It was a small international community but people got along extremely well. The education was very elementary in various respects, but wives contributed, they taught school, everyone worked together.

Q: Well, this is the real fun of the Foreign Service.

STOCKMAN: It was.

Q: Satellites were not even in the air at that time or not?

STOCKMAN: Of course the military establishment had most of the resources. There were satellites up there and certainly were dedicated. I suppose you really had to be in the inner circle to get access to those things. It certainly wasn't in our budget and planning at that point. However, as progress and technology set in we quickly changed with the times.

Q: But these weren't the times?

STOCKMAN: No we are talking about 10 or 12 years prematurely here.

Q: Well, then we have you leaving there and going to Geneva from 1975-77. Having gone from high cost Singapore to go to high cost Geneva was this a problem or not?

STOCKMAN: It was a problem as a matter of fact. It was literally going out of the pan into the fire. Of course, salaries had increased slowly and gradually with the years, but as everyone knows Geneva was one of the more expensive Foreign Service posts around in those days, and I suppose still is. But I would have to say that the pluses far offset the minuses. The beauty of the country, the educational facilities available...of course I am talking only about the tangible benefits, we haven't talked about the job yet...but it was a hard decision to make in some respects. After all one would be giving up the drivers position and fall back into the pack which is difficult after having a taste of attending country team meetings, doing planning with an admin officer one on one, to again take a secondary seat.

Q: This is always one of the hardest things to do. That is why we are able to keep our small posts staffed, people feel much more they belong.

STOCKMAN: Well, I had lobbied and made every effort on my own part to obtain some kind of upward mobility. As you well know in the old days of the Foreign Service it never hurt to have a godfather around, which we all realized existed.

Q: A godfather being sort of a patron who you can get advice from.

STOCKMAN: But you know if you were of such a mind, and I certainly was, I wanted to see as many of the Bureaus and areas of the world as possible during my career. Of course there was give and take if that was your philosophy, you had to take the good with the bad. Also in the bidding process we had to indicate high, low and medium bids. Well, anyway, it was a stroke of good luck. Things turned out for the better. Ironically it led to other assignments, I think. Whether it was by accident or fate, I don't know.

We got deeply involved from day one. Geneva was an extremely busy post. There were all kinds of work requirements. This was, of course, the Carter Administration years. I remember one of the first dramatic things that came out of the White House and the OMB

was the attempt as you can remember to find more sources of revenue. One of the prime targets was the overseas community paying more of their share. Well the attempt to put all of our allowances into the income bracket scared the wits out of most Foreign Service people. How in the world could we ever afford to pay taxes on the educational allowance, travel, etc. It was absurd and as it turned out it didn't happen. But it was certainly food for thought.

Anyway, as far as the post went the disappointing part of it professionally was that unless you really made a conscious attempt to get to know individuals, one on one, it could be a very impersonal, typical European post. You went to work, you left work, and there was very little social life and friends outside. Certainly the Swiss were not people to make friends with easily. They were rather cold and austere. But, again, I think the success that one has, especially in the communications field frequently is through the contacts that your wife and children make. I have to really give them credit that what social life we did have came primarily through those contacts and a few others we had known before. But one could still do an awful lot on an individual basis. Morale was not the greatest. Joe Meresman was probably one of the real positive lights at that post.

Q: What was he?

STOCKMAN: He was the Admin Counselor. He labored continuously for staff personnel, in particular, citing the enormous cost of trying to live there and there was very little support from the IO Bureau.

Q: IO being International Organizations.

STOCKMAN: He basically did not win a lot of battles, but he certainly convinced us that he was on our side.

The interesting part though was that at this particular time on the job the age of communications, the technology and the improvements, were starting to surface and we

were making some very dramatic changes in the technology that have an impact to today and will continue to do so.

Q: Can you give an idea about what you are talking about?

STOCKMAN: Yes. We changed our operation entirely from a purely mechanical electrical machine type manual operation to computers. This was just a huge dramatic change in modes of operating. Very few people in those days had any prior experience with computers. Most people kind of feared them. It was new to everyone, officer and staff alike. Of course, in Personnel the bead counters' first reaction was “Oh my God, this is the perfect justification for downsizing communications staffing pattern.” Well, that turned out to be entirely false. There is a learning curve with any new change in any profession, but certainly converting to computers. The learning curve exists to this day. We simply can't keep up with the developments. The life expectancy of these things is normally three to five years before there is another generation causing a new learning process. So that was my introduction to the real world of technology in communications.

Q: How exciting.

STOCKMAN: It was.

I suppose the other revelation that surfaced was the fact that not everyone can cope with this change. We all tend to think that with younger people come bright minds and better prepared people, etc. That was not necessarily the case as we found out and learned through personnel and staffing changes there.

Our tour was only two years but nevertheless we were supporting all of the SALT talks, the whole establishment that would go back and forth between Geneva and Washington and the UN. We supported the Multilateral Trade Negotiations; ACDA, arms control; and the whole realm of other visitors to the United Nations there in Geneva. Of course it was

not accredited to the country, the capital was in Bern, we were accredited to the United Nations which many people really don't understand. So it was truly a unique assignment.

I think the one aspect of work that is lost sight of is that as everyone knows Jimmy Carter very much advanced human rights and it was a huge operation there this Human Rights Division. I am trying to recall the name of the man who was so successful, it escapes me now.Oh yes, Ronald Palmer.

Q: Actually you can fill some of these names in. You will be getting a draft for editing.

STOCKMAN: They were a very small section, very dynamic and very dedicated to that particular interest. But there were huge numbers of refugees who were coming out of the Communist Bloc countries, filtering through Vienna, Austria out of Moscow. So we were required to support this effort in communications. In every case it meant an exchange of telegrams on a given individual or family for every refugee. The UN, of course, was the organization that carried out the details and made it happen. But the US mission was tasked to do that. It was a huge workload.

Q: Did you know if there were other UN communicators there and if so did you have much contact with them?

STOCKMAN: No. In fact I honestly know very little about the UN communications system as a group. I have heard a little bit about them through a much later assignment at the UN a year ago. They, of course, do have this communications section. But I don't think it is anywhere near as sophisticated as what the US government has.

Q: And then you moved from Geneva to what strikes me as being rather interesting but marginal post, Dublin.

STOCKMAN: Yes it is. It is very difficult to understand Dublin, I think, for one particular reason, not being of Irish extraction with a name like Stockman. I think the first words

spoken to me at least in that embassy kind of set the tone. “What is a person like you with a name like Stockman doing in our embassy?”

Q: I take it was very much an Irish enclave.

STOCKMAN: It certainly was. Tom Kelly, the administrator, was eventually replaced by another non-Irishman called John Dieffenderfer. He helped break the ice. Once John came I didn't have any problems.

In terms of importance, of course, on a scale of one to ten, I think you would honestly have to put Dublin somewhere in the category of 2 to 4. As they say sometimes and not very complimentary, small potatoes in a big patch. But it did have the uncanny way of rising to the top from time to time and there are a few examples that I can cite.

As you remember in those years, terrorism in Central America, and particularly El Salvador, was getting entirely out of hand. And, of course, Ireland being Catholic and interested in that part of the world had its own mandate to pursue. Well, ironically again, as things happen, the Archbishop of Shannon was in El Salvador when they were installing a new bishop when a massacre occurred in the cathedral and killed Archbishop Romero. Well that set off protests like you have never seen and Ireland was going to lead the pact and condemn this and US policy and everything that went with it, for right or wrong. Perhaps they were absolutely right as we know from things that have been revealed to us later on.

The other example that really and truly affected communications in a very important way at the time was the Iranian hostage crisis. Now Ireland happened to have the Presidency of the EEC at the time. This was in the beginning of the crisis...

Q: November, 1979 was when they took it over.

STOCKMAN: And somewhere in the end of this thing, of course, as you recall, the hostages were finally released and Ireland played another role there in that the Prime Minister at the time convinced the Ambassador, Ambassador William Shannon, who had come from the New York Times world as a political appointee, to assist in letting the plane touch down in Shannon on the way home. This was obviously for political motives. He was up for reelection one more time. What better mileage could you get than welcoming the hostages home using Shannon airport for refueling purposes, of course, and a chance to get off the plane and rest a bit. Well you know they were quite anxious to get home. They would have rather gone directly home and stopped all the PR, but that was one example of high power politics.

Another incident happened in the course of that tour where former President Ford was passing through Ireland with a group called Charter Oil, he was on the board. We were asked to support that visit. It was the first of ten worldwide stops with this group. Well, the site was up near the North Ireland border in definite IRA country, so it was going to require quite an extensive effort, primarily on the part of security, let along logistics, to support a visit by a former President in that part of the woods. They had never seen communications in that area ever. They had no telephones. Therefore, one had to find working contacts quickly and get it done. It got done. It worked, it was primitive. We didn't have much Department support at all, but we got it done.

Q: How did you find Ambassador Shannon? You know all these political ambassadors seem to be Irish. Right now we have deceased President Kennedy's sister as the Ambassador to Ireland so things haven't changed. But how did you find Ambassador Shannon?

STOCKMAN: Well, one on one I think one could say he was a very congenial, dry humored man. He was certainly the academic type who was quite content to come in during business hours, quietly sit in his office and do his think pieces and politicking or whatever he was there to do. It was a well known fact that he communicated directly with

the White House. Bureaucratic channels could do what they may, but for the most part he turned things over to the DCM whose name was Charles Rushing, a career diplomat who did not have an easy task. The embassy staffing was one of a kind, with two consular officers. It was primarily a consular post as you can appreciate. Therefore, most of what the Ambassador did was on the PR level making contacts, etc.

Obviously, though, the IRA was a very touchy thorn in the side for both governments. There were numerous protests in the streets in those days. There were attempts to bomb some of the British at the embassy and in the streets of Dublin. Other incidents as I can recall at the time, there had been a very painful strike of civil servants, particularly the PPT, Post, Phone and Telegraph, right before we got there that summer. There were fuel embargoes or scarcities while we were there. They had had a major snowstorm like they hadn't seen in 50 years. So the unpredictable happened in the course of those three years. I think the economy was quite fragile. US investors would set up shop, get their tax holiday etc... Of course, in EEC fashion, bureaucrats were all over the place, wages were out of proportion to production and inflation was quite high.

What did we get out of the tour? Well in different shapes and forms I think it was a very fulfilling tour. One met wonderful people there. The restaurants and the food were so-so. But our boys made a wonderful group of friends. The education was as solid as could be expected, very much in British fashion, although they wouldn't admit it. I would say overall it was a very enjoyable tour. Not particularly career enhancing though.

Q: Then you went off to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. You certainly are touching every base in the geographic book as far as areas go.

STOCKMAN: Well, as I mentioned to you, the philosophy was to see as much of the world as possible. I have to admit we did not bid on this assignment. That was one that was dictated to us and for reasons unknown to me. I think the assignment came about for a couple of reasons. One, perhaps of my own doing and stubbornness. We did not get very

good support from the Regional Communications Center in Bonn in Dublin. What little support we did get came out of London and begrudgingly at that. Consequently it was a real source of frustration for the embassy that we could not have better communication facilities there. And I did my best to bring it to the attention of the regional authorities who were frankly shirking their responsibilities. The Ambassador was extremely frustrated with this at times. For example, he lived in a house in Phoenix Park that was an isolated home in the middle of this huge park and frequently had no telephone communications. We could have resolved that very easily with a little bit of money. But for reasons of indifference, it never got accomplished. We knew what the problem was but it simply couldn't be budgeted. I made a lot of waves about that. One of the consequences of it was, “We are going to give you a real assignment where you will shut up.” And that was Riyadh. But it did prove to be truly one of the most challenging jobs I ever had. The timing was absolutely perfect as far as a challenge goes. The Saudis had determined about this time that all foreign missions would relocate in Riyadh which would become the new capital.

Q: Before that it had been in Jeddah.

STOCKMAN: Yes. How do you do this overnight? Well, most of the huge construction projects in Riyadh, similar to Brasilia, were completed on time as the Saudis insisted. The last was the building of the diplomatic city. Our particular embassy was somewhat behind schedule mostly because of our lackadaisical attitude about this thing and the incompetence, I think, of FBO.

Q: Foreign Buildings Operation, which is not known for its effectiveness.

STOCKMAN: But that too in itself was our own undoing. You have to keep in mind at this point in time Ambassador Richard Murphy was the Ambassador...

Q: He and I were in the same entry class.

STOCKMAN: Well you know what a wonderful person he is.

Q: A real expert on the Arab world.

STOCKMAN: He is and I have always thought with a bit of sadness that he was shuttled out of the picture when the Persian Gulf developed. For some unexplainable reason his name never surfaced again, maybe by choice or whatever. But at any rate he was Ambassador at the time. There were some very important things happening in that time frame. One of which is, and I will only touch on it lightly for obvious reasons...but there was no question about it that the Iran scandal was unfolding at that very point in time...

Q: This is the Reagan Administration swapping weapons to try to get hostages out of Beirut.

STOCKMAN: And who knows the way the shots were called, but it is a fact that they were taking place. One could see obvious signs of very high level things going on. It is not my place to provide any details, of course, but it kept things on pins and needles. We were attempting during this whole period to constantly upgrade the total lack of communications capability in Riyadh. We were in a very pitiful, leased building which was ill equipped to carry out the mission. My task was to identify these requirements and correct the problem and get it done. All this was to be accomplished in the period of two years, including a building that was not even started when we arrived, right next door, that eventually got put up. We had to tie them together and make it a workable embassy until the diplomatic city could be completed. The support out of Washington and regionally in the beginning was absolutely pathetic. They were not focusing on this whatever. It was a total act of irresponsibility in my way of thinking. Management types should have been called to task. Eventually they got the message in a very, very strong manner. It was feast or famine. I was not going to be the sacrificial lamb. Rocky Suddarth, was the DCM. After all we had to identify suitable homes for the Ambassador, the DCM and others, get telephones put into these homes and all kinds of requirements. Our staff was inadequate. I finally got it

increased to a total of three while I was there. There was no diplomatic courier service in place. There was nothing when I arrived. To start from scratch is not an easy task.

Q: When you have problems there with your kind of work in communications, is this Near Eastern Affairs Bureau or Communications Bureau?

STOCKMAN: Well, at this point in time the Office of Communications unfortunately was not a Bureau. That did not come about until the late '80s. So at this point it was simply an office of communications subordinate to the A Bureau. Now, once we were assigned, of course, to an embassy we became part of the Bureau as part of the staffing pattern, but we nevertheless had to work through regional offices through our chain of command. So we were serving two masters and you know what happens when you do that. Nobody wins and you can do nothing but wrong or fail. So it was a very frustrating time.

I must say the most delightful part of it, however, was the housing that we eventually got. In the beginning we were all living in prefab homes handed down or subleased through other American firms who had done business and then vacated these places and it was not very nice. In fact it was kind of pathetic. But we survived nine months until we finally got into some very nice established housing which made all the difference in the world. But it is incredible how people stick together in hard times at a post like that. The wives did not particularly resent being there. They were treated decently, chauffeured around by embassy cars, because they couldn't drive. They adapted, I thought, incredibly well. So did the children for that matter. Of course the Saudi practice was to allow education only up to the ninth grade. They wanted the children to go elsewhere after that.

[Tape 2 - lost beginning of Side A due to tapeover of ending of interview]

...Needless to say those things have to be honored, they should be honored and I think in most cases they are. There has always been kind of a jealous possessiveness about communications personnel to maybe go too far in the interest of secretness and confidentiality and to perhaps mislead the average customer who has a right to know

some things, to deprive them of this in the interest of security, etc. But I think you can appreciate the need for this so-called back channel that you talk about. I really would say that abuse of such a thing, of course, could make an ambassador very, very nervous as the principal officer at any post. Obviously when the chief does not know what the Indians are doing we have a serious problem. When the Secretary of State cannot communicate with his Ambassador in any given country at the level that he wishes to , we have a very serious problem. And, of course, we all know the most classic case of all in our memory when things were really falling apart in Moscow, how difficult it became to reinvent the wheel there. We can't go into a lot of detail, of course, but having been in Washington at the time...

Q: We are talking 1987-89.

STOCKMAN: We basically have to do what has to be done.

Q: Because of all the sensitive material flowing through you, have you ever found either security people or inspector generals putting any particular burden on you because of leaks, etc.? Is this a problem that happens to communicators?

STOCKMAN: Well, I have never seen any abuse on either side of the fence. Whether enforcement or carrying out one's duties and responsibilities from the communication's center point of view. I think that common sense in most cases prevails. In one rare case, which I have mentioned to you, an individual tried to abuse a position of power and obtain information that he was not entitled to which I refuse to give them, even though they felt they were entitled to. Perhaps I paid a price for maintaining the integrity of the system. If so, so be it. But that would be the one rare instance that I can ever remember along those lines, and it was exceptionable.

Q: You left Riyadh in 1984 and things were pretty well in place by that time?

STOCKMAN: They were virtually about as good as we could expect them to be until the diplomatic city was completed which I think happened some time in 1985, maybe early 1986. I would love to go back and see it again just out of plain curiosity, although I must say that I was not overly fond of trying to do business in Riyadh before it became a US Embassy. A Liaison Office is no cup of tea to work in. One gets spoiled and becomes very presumptuous all the time of doing business as an embassy employee. A Liaison Office, as you well know and can appreciate, has no diplomatic status. You are very vulnerable to the whims and fancies of local authorities, the airport, etc.

Q: How did you find your working relations with the Saudis?

STOCKMAN: Well, most contacts with the Saudis are kept to a bare minimum because of the way they like to do business. They are screened by so many buffer zones. On one occasion in two years I was able to meet a Saudi and invite him to our home. At all other times I was dealing basically with Bell Canada employees in the Ministry of PTT, or perhaps British on some occasions. Very rarely a Saudi. That is the way they like to do business. It worked. There was no real problem. It kind of disappointed me in a way that one doesn't get to meet some of the people of a country, but that was Saudi Arabia.

Q: Well, you came back to the Department for about four years, 1984-88?

STOCKMAN: Yes, that was by choice for several reasons. I was not really very pleased with the promotional progress or the lack thereof and felt that the only way to crack the ice was to go back and prove not only to myself but to the establishment that I could perform my job at a higher level. Even though efficiency reports indicated that, still you had to prove yourself. So I lobbied very strongly for that and was able to wiggle my way into the Department in the Office of Communications Security, of all places. It started there at least. One thing led to another and I ended up most of the time in the Foreign Operations Division which was the heart and soul of working there as a Foreign Service employee. You liaisoned with anyone and everyone from the top of the building to the bottom, but

particularly with the Bureaus with whom and for whom you were responsible as a liaison partner.

Q: This was within the Office of Security?

STOCKMAN: Well, I started in the Office of Communications, Security Division and then moved around to Special Projects to the Foreign Operations Division of the Office of Communications.

Of course we were in those days in a great transition time in many respects. This whole movement to convert what we called OC, Office of Communications, to the eventual Bureau status of the Information Management, was all taking place. We were very cleverly and subtly downsizing the staffing in communications from roughly 1200 personnel to 900. Very few people realized it. It was basically, I am convinced, a trade-off between management in the Department of technology for downsizing personnel and to some extent the exchange was fair given the advantages of technology. However, in terms of actual expenses I doubt very seriously if either management level, communications management or the bureaus, fully understood the learning curve in this thing, the training involved, the maintenance, the inventory accountability, and logistics. We are talking huge sums of money. Granted one of the real important tradeoffs in the whole process was the reduction in size of the equipment which was something which we never enjoyed before. You could now do many, many more things with a package that was ten times more productive, dynamic and potentially open to all kinds of advantages than ever before. The size of this equipment was miniaturized and therefore you no longer needed large communications centers. You could do a lot more with a lot less, including fewer people. It was undoubtedly the most exciting time that one could ever be in the Department, in my opinion.

Q: Also by being in the Department you would see the new stuff whereas if you were out at a post you might be at the end of the supply and it may never get there in your time.

STOCKMAN: Well, we were attempting to do several things at the same time. I would really have to cite two key individuals or three, who were more than instrumental and understood what was going on and implemented it very effectively. That was a fellow by the name of Stu Branch, who was the DAS for OC. His successor was Bob Ribera, who was followed by the final DAS for the Office of Communications, Bob Caffrey. Then, of course, the whole operation was subjugated to the Diplomatic Security Bureau for a while under the A Bureau and eventually it became the Information Management Bureau with one DAS, which it should have been all along. We never had that bureau status before and it caused a lot of problems. Although the budget of OC was huge as was the staffing consuming a good part of the State Department budget overall, it never had the bureau status. There was no way that you could begin to merge and streamline and integrate all of this communications technology to some intelligent form of life without getting all these interests together. I mean the redundancy, the cost...you had for example an unclassified word processing operation that was built on the WANG models of equipment that was cumbersome. One of the ironies of this is the high level group that came out here last week and saw this modern form of computer and everything here in Technicolor and they go back to the Department and are in the 18th century so to speak. They were overwhelmed.

Q: I know. When I was in Korea we went down the WANG path which was one that basically died because it didn't keep up with the process.

STOCKMAN: There are numerous classic examples of this today out in the field and this has become particularly painful when you get into huge budget and fiscal operations, regional centers, and there are several of them around the world, and they are attempting to use this outdated technology and perform all these administrative tasks. The consular operation sees the same thing in their operation trying to do things electronically today instead of using the mail and all the tedious rubber stamping, etc. There is virtually no form

of communications or word processing that hasn't been reviewed and integrated into this plan now in the Department. It is long overdue and is really going in the right direction.

Q: When you were in the Department working on these things, we are talking about the mid 80s, did you find real bureaucratic problems with people afraid that their turf was being trampled upon? What were some of the problems?

STOCKMAN: Absolutely. The Bureaus had always had their own budgets for word processing, etc., under their own control. They even had training facilities and positions identified overseas which were managed through the Bureaus. It was a competitive game. Those who were clever and savvy enough about the equipment and what it could do, etc., knew how to purchase it, etc., get key individuals who were pre-trained to come on board and go out and take care of these things. But it was not cost effective the way it was being done. They knew it, but they were not about to give up the turf battle. When we got into the classified part of it called CIHS, classified information handling systems, that was handled by the Office of Communications. The whole criteria and the manner in which that was planned and implemented was controlled and operated out of the Office of Communications. It was then on a much more equitable basis, distributing this or that to each of the five Bureaus. The same thing was true of the other forms of communications...secure voice and data traffic. Of course, traditionally, the European Bureau always got the biggest and best of everything for the longest time.

Q: Even although its requirements often were not as demanding as say getting something out to Israel or Egypt, or a post under fire.

STOCKMAN: Yes. I think beyond the shadow of a doubt, two or three classical confrontations in the Middle East, actual wars between Israel and various Arab countries, and all of the acts of terrorism highlighted this deficiency. All the troubles in Latin and Central America with terrorism, as well, reemphasized the lack of equality in the distribution in the system. It became painfully obvious at the M management level that

there was something wrong with this. Finally reviews were put into place and common sense set in. And there was also the whole issue of fighting the drug war. You can't fight very effective drug wars unless you have real time, live time communications capability. It can't be done. Today it can be done, thanks to this integration and strong leadership. Somebody had to come in and dictate and stop these turf battles. It was stupid and senseless.

Q: This is where you give the credit to the heads of the Office of Communications while you were there?

STOCKMAN: Well, they certainly made their contribution. There was a huge program that the Office of Communications was promoting, it was called the Department of State Telecommunication Network. It was more than just a plan. There was an actual request for proposal, and RFP, which is an open bid advertised in all the commercial papers and trade magazines inviting all the communications giants to come up with bid proposals for implementing this plan for the State Department. It was to encompass all other agencies under the State Department auspices overseas. We would provide the umbrella and they would be contributing to the cost. In its design it was a very ambitious, badly needed project. It did not make it all the way through Congress but it certainly is being implemented in other ways today out in the field. In this particular work I am in now as a retired annuitant, I am seeing very strong concrete evidence of it. We have been able to accomplish so much more in the last five years with fewer people and better technology than in the whole previous 25 years that I can remember. It is just incredible the things that can be done today, especially in remote parts of the world like we are in now.

Q: Then you went off not exactly off to a remote area, you went to Ottawa.

STOCKMAN: Well, in between that I went off to the Sinai.

Q: Oh, yes, tell me about the Sinai, the Multilateral Forces and Observers.

STOCKMAN: I did that primarily for two reasons to be very truthful. One was that I was kind of burned out after four years in Washington doing basically two full time jobs. Again the career promotional track settled down after some quiet success in the beginning. I said I would force the issue. And I frankly just wanted to compete in another whole new area. The Office of Communications had initially been responsible for the Camp David implementation process out in the Sinai. In the transition of that operation it then became the task of the MFO based in Rome, an international group of eleven countries to carry out this mandate. And therefore when this invitation appeared in the Department, I bid on it and qualified and spent a year out there.

Q: What were you doing? Will you explain what this force was?

STOCKMAN: The MFO was established to, I believe, invite other nations into the peace making process to make it more diplomatic, more appealing to the two factions, Israel and Egypt. And, of course, out of the foreign aide given to both Israel and Egypt to the tune of almost $3.5 billion both countries had to pay the cost of the MFO operations, so it was not for free. There were eleven countries participating in the peacekeeping operation in the northern part of the Sinai desert.

Q: What was your main task?

STOCKMAN: My task and that of the other civilian observers, was to do reconnaissance work by air in each of the four divided zones of the Sinai. One week we would do that by air and the second week we would follow up on the ground physically examining, inspecting, the various sites within a given zone. This would go on week after week. The whole intent and purpose was to assure both parties and our government that the Camp David peace treaty would be kept in tact and therefore any violations that were witnessed or sighted would be immediately discussed and there would be no military arms build up in the Sinai again. It has worked very successfully.

Q: Dealing with communications, what particularly were you doing?

STOCKMAN: I was truly out of cone, other than the actual gear we used. My role was strictly to this international organization as an observer.

Q: So you were going out either flying or in a jeep and inspect a place?

STOCKMAN: Yes. We worked in teams. There would be always two observers and a minimum of one Egyptian or Israeli accompanying us within that zone of operations. But I was completely divorced from my previous work in communications.

Q: I have talked to some people who were in one phase or another of this. Could you talk about your impression of how the Israelis treated this and operated and also the Egyptians?

STOCKMAN: Well, it was a very interesting operation, I thought. The procedures were clearly established by the Camp David Peace Accord, the treaty that was signed by both parties. It was basically a very simple process in terms of the reconnaissance work and the examination of sites. There was a short advance notice given of where we would be at a given specific time. There was no question of what we were doing and why. There was very little lack of cooperation on either side, both parties understood the nature of the missions. They also understood that if this thing was to be successful they would have to cooperate. I don't think there was any deliberate, malicious attempt by either party to ever violate this treaty or slow us down in our work. They understood what their role was and the importance of it. It was really, truly a unique experience to be able to go out there and do this. We would be on assignment for a one-year leave of absence with full reemployment rights. Some people extended who would retire out there. But we were basically not identified with the State Department at all. We consisted of 12 former military officers and 12 civilians on loan or secondment.

Q: I have interviewed some people who were there when this was first set up and at that time there was a feeling that whereas the Egyptians were kind of going along with it, the Israelis kept pushing, trying to slip things in. It was kind of a game for them. There were some showdowns, etc. But I take it by the time you got there it was a fairly mature process and the games had already been played.

STOCKMAN: I can appreciate what you are saying and in the time frame I was there these difficulties had been ironed out. I know specifically what you are referring to because there is still evidence of what took place out there. Keep in mind as the Israelis retrenched back towards the original borders and gave up reluctantly or otherwise the territory in the Sinai, they did it in phases which I think is exactly what the treaty called for. They obviously were reluctant to give up the territory for obvious reasons. I think today if you were to ask them they are perfectly at peace with this, especially as they have negotiated a peace with the PLO now. They have matured, obviously. In those days, however, the very base on which the MFO is located on was a prior Israeli air base. The process of releasing that and trying to come to what they considered a fair price on that air base and its value, there were a lot of disagreements. They were unhappy. But that is not uncommon with the Israelis. They are not an easy people to please. They never seem to get enough. They are always second-guessing everyone. They always know better.

Q: This is a pattern one has seen. A small country and if you are not aggressive you can get ground under.

STOCKMAN: I wouldn't call it insecurity, it is just aggressiveness. But they literally blew up some facilities on that base. They knocked out some windows, destroyed trees, unnecessarily because they didn't get their way. It was restored to some extent. Yes, it may have slowed up the process a little bit. Did they gain anything from this? I doubt it seriously. It was just an act of stubbornness. However at this time they can travel to and from Egypt and vice versa so it was only a question of time.

The original site, though, of the State Department's communications operation when this all began was up on the Giddi Pass, one of the famous strategic points. There were very important tanks battles and other confrontations that went on in that area. That is where they located the communications sight, it was perfect for this. There were contract operators out there implementing the security zones called E-Systems. They did the actual monitoring. But then they were replaced by the MFO.

Now the civilian observers who actually do the physical sites and inspections are all Americans, exclusively Americans. All the other contingents simply support the operation.

Q: Then you came back to the Department for a little while and then off to Ottawa. Is that right?

STOCKMAN: Right.

Q: And you were in Ottawa for a relatively short time.

STOCKMAN: Yes. That was not by design or planning. It was a job opportunity that developed my last year in the Department and I could not pass it up. It was a very unique operation going on there. Ottawa is a particular kind of assignment. I assume in the past most of the ambassadors have been political appointees. That speaks for itself. The relationship with the President is always a very close one. So in terms of a standard State Department assignment it is not that. It can be a tough one. Every agency in the Federal phone directory in Washington DC, I think, is up there. A lot of work goes on. There are numerous visitors. It is a very different kind of assignment.

Anyway the assignment lasted barely a year. I became ill and had to return to the States for treatment for cancer and spent a full year doing that in Kansas City, my home place of residence. At the end of that period I had had a lot of time to think about all these things and felt very strongly that maybe things like this happen for a reason and perhaps it

would be in my best interest to retire. We had planned to do that anyway after a four-year assignment in Ottawa, but it was curtailed by about three years.

So consequently when I started getting some phone calls from Washington from my friends in communications, I didn't exactly know why in the beginning, this was in late 1991 and early part of 1992. Slowly but surely the mystery became revealed and I applied for the retired annuitant program that I am now in.

Q: This is where you can come back and work up to a certain point?

STOCKMAN: Exactly.

Q: Since you have been doing this, have you concentrated in an area or sort of going off?

STOCKMAN: Well, that is one of the good and bad points of this program. We are allowed to work for the most part a maximum of three to six months of the year. In terms of the assignment they basically ask us to be available for worldwide assignment if possible. And to an extent I have been very fortunate because three out of five assignments I have enjoyed so far have been in the former Soviet Union. I went to Tashkent in the summer of 1992, June, July and part of August; followed by Tbilisi in October, November and part of December. In between those two assignments I was asked to go to New York for a brief period, which turned out to be a month. So I had a pretty active year the second half of 1992. And then this year when 1993 rolled around there was kind of a down period until about the end of March when they asked me to go to Caracas for about a month. I had never been there before and I enjoyed that. But it was still not the kind of assignment that these are out here in the former Soviet Union. This makes my second trip to Bishkek.

Q: Well, as long as I have you here, tell me a little about Tashkent. What was your impression?. The Soviet Union has basically collapsed and some of its component parts have become independent states. What was your impression of Tashkent which was the

capital of Uzbekistan and what you saw there and also how our very new embassy was operating there?

STOCKMAN: Well, as you can appreciate, for someone who had never worked or traveled behind the Iron Curtain, almost anything you do or see is an adventure. You arrive knowing very little about the assignment other than a few simple briefings that advanced teams can give you. You might pick up an atlas or some other type of informational guide to give you a clue before you pack or do anything else. But at any rate the initial reactions for me were very, very profound and unforgettable experiences. Tashkent was supposed to have been the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union. I really have my doubts after seeing Tashkent for ten weeks...June, July and August of 1992...I seriously have my doubts about its superpower status...the Soviet Union and Tashkent's role in it...judging by what I saw.

You arrive there after a very long trip, having overnighted in Moscow. In those days all of us entered through Moscow and fanned out to the various independent states by way of Aeroflot. Well, of course, it is quite a shock to fly on Aeroflot . I don't care how experienced you are traveling, that is a unique experience.

Q: What's it like?

STOCKMAN: Oh, it is like no other airline in the world. I really think the kindest description you can give of Aeroflot is simply a wide bodied cattle car. They are not designed with comfort in mind or any of the amenities of life that we are accustomed to, as Westerners, as Americans. They are simply devices for getting huge numbers of people point to point at the cheapest possible cost. Some of the impressions I you got will last with me forever. It is a very impersonal experience. You find a seat and somehow as Westerners you seem to get the last remaining seats on this huge plane. They are not very clean, to put it mildly. They are not very comfortable. And I wonder how well they are maintained as far as safety goes. The tires, for example, looked very bald. The ride is okay. You are not about to be

entertained on these flights in any form and you are not going to receive any kind of food or drink that you might expect on a normal airline. Consequently you are quite happy when you get there.

Eventually you get there. The only arrangement for housing was the Intourist Hotel where we stayed for ten solid weeks. Again the same type of experience that the former Soviet Union offered foreigners. The all over city of Tashkent, itself, is kind of unique. They had a major earthquake there in the late '60s. Apparently the entire city had to be completely rebuilt. It took the Soviets, they say, ten years to do that. Judging from the looks of things today, I don't think that they ever went back and remodeled anything. Soviet construction is quite a joke. A US seismologist passed through and took a few days look of the overall city and quickly reached the conclusion that if they were to have another major earthquake of the same proportions, 6 or 7 on the Richter scale, the same thing would happen all over again. In other words they didn't learn much from the previous experience.

Soviet construction per se is crude, it functions, it is not particularly esthetically pleasing and I really don't have much to say for it. An Intourist hotel might be a classic example of how not to do it. It works, more or less, but certainly is not comfortable. It is monotonous. It is just not a very pleasant experience. Food, drink, culture, customs...Tashkent is described as a moderate Moslem city. People are very sober. They dress very modestly. Nothing is flashy or stylish in their clothing. The food that is available is again pretty much the same type, very basic. You don't see very many over weight people there, which I think speaks for itself. I would expect that the diet is not exceptionally nutritious based upon what we were served in the Intourist hotel day after day. It is not very plentiful either. Meats and dairy products are almost nonexistent.

The city, itself, is kind of nondescript in the sense that it is not alive. You see huge, huge avenues laid out in typical Soviet style that would dwarf any US city. We would not be able to afford the luxury of taking such huge spaces for large avenues and underpasses for pedestrians. Many and most of these things were designed for two reasons. I think

one to psychologically give the people a sense of openness because they were living in such congested, disagreeable apartments and when they got out into the open people had a sense of freedom. They typically have theaters, a building dedicated to annual circus visits, things of this nature that were all very socialist in design and intent.

You didn't really see what you see so commonly in America. For example, obviously you didn't see churches, because of the prohibition on religion. You didn't see building easily identified as schools. You didn't see hospitals as such. Yes you would see ambulances from time to time. You saw police and civil guards. Tashkent had more than its share of those. They were more readily visible in the government building area grounds for obvious reasons. But likewise they were very apt to stop motorists frequently and randomly one suspects more for bribes then anything else. Or maybe it was their only source of income. Who knows.

Tashkent, not unlike some other cities I have seen, are very dark at night. They are poorly lighted. It is very dangerous from a physical point of view to walk on their sidewalks at night because they have so many open holes and dangerous debris lying around. There is not the cleanliness and the upkeep of the buildings. There would be debris everywhere. Tashkent in its own right was far better and cleaner than other places that I have seen for whatever reason I don't understand. Maybe because there were the vehicles and crews to do these kinds of chores of maintaining some standard of living and hygiene.

You would go to open markets where the farming community would sell the products to the local community which was quite an interesting sight. The conclusion that I reached very quickly was that what was produced today is consumed today. Not much technology in terms of preservation which must obviously create great problems in the winter time. How do you survive in the winter? Some very basic questions from which you can draw obvious conclusions just by observing and watching and seeing what goes on. Everywhere you go in this part of the world, also there must be concern about the availability of fuel, whether it is for the few cars that are around or the planes in which you can get in and

out of these places. It's becoming a real serious problem for all purposes...government, transportation, industrial production...the lack of vehicles, the maintenance of roads, the availability of fuel. The railroads that you do see, and I have noticed this now in two of the three countries I have been in, look poorly maintained. The equipment is old, it is rusty, it is dilapidated. I don't think you could find anything similar to this anywhere in the US today, other than in a museum, perhaps. It is incredible.

Q: What was your impression of our embassy in Tashkent?

STOCKMAN: Well, this was my first experience in this program, working out here in these new CIS countries.

Q: CIS stands for?

STOCKMAN: At this point of time we used Commonwealth of Independent States.

Q: These are sort of the central Asian states including up through Georgia, too.

STOCKMAN: Yes, I think there is a total of 15.

Q: Really former Soviet states not including Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

STOCKMAN: Right. In all probability we will only serve on this program for maybe three or four years total, five perhaps. Maybe they will eventually designate a permanent party. But, anyway, getting back to your point. This particular embassy superficially appeared to be a beautiful building, an ideal selected spot. It was obviously going to be an area in which the Uzbek government wanted the diplomatic missions who were coming to stay in. We were given a building which was originally supposed to be used for say a chamber of commerce or exhibition hall. As it turned out it was anything but functional. It actually had a fully furnished discotheque with refrigerators and everything in the basement of it. We had no real protective security means to cordon off that area. For security reasons in the beginning it was a nightmare. We didn't know who was down there, who would use it. We

couldn't use it freely even for a luncheon facility. That is just one of the anomalies of this whole thing.

As you went into the building there was an atrium running up through 60 percent of the building from the main floor up to the ceiling with non-usable space. We were left with 40 percent of the building to use as an embassy which was just unworkable. No matter what operation you are talking about. Whether it was consular operations or GSO or communications, or USIS, or administration, it really didn't matter. The offices were tiny. In addition, from a physical standpoint of view, the building used the typical aluminum wiring, nothing worked. It was dangerous and easily set on fire. The engineering of it was very poor. The Brazilians have an expression that pretty well sizes it up. They say bonito mas ordinario , “cute but ordinary,” and that was really it in a nutshell.

Q: What was the spirit of the embassy? Here was a brand new state and we were setting up things. Could you describe the feeling?

STOCKMAN: That is a very interesting question because you could ask the same question, of course, in each and every embassy in the 15 newly established places. I actually arrived there after it had been opened for about two and a half months. I was starting from scratch building communications. Even the equipment had not arrived when I was first there. What did come in came in on support flights. But getting to your point and question, initially, of course, there was a tremendous problem in staffing these embassies. You can imagine being tasked with opening 15 embassies at one time. How do you start? Who do you choose? Language skills. Who is available? So somehow you get a team together, brief them and assure them that you will hold their hand and support them. So spirits are high. Volunteers are in some cases ambitious, some are just simply romantic, some are well prepared, and some are not prepared to even do the task that has to be accomplished.

I would say initially the personal relationships are really key to getting something going effectively. In this particular case, Tashkent, had such a high number in turnover, rotation of TDYers, that it was really painful to those few who were permanent party. They were tired of this constant turnover. They had no assurances that others would volunteer and become permanent party and quite honestly I don't think their expectations were very high. What they did see or were able to predict was not something that you really wanted to think about too long. In other words, .we raised the flag, we opened the doors, a few of us knew what we were supposed to do and how to get it started. We have a cadre of FSNs who didn't even understand what an FSN was.

Q: FSN being Foreign Service National, local employees.

STOCKMAN: How these people were selected, cleared and hired god only knows. Obviously mistakes were made. Some of the wrong people may have been hired, some overqualified and unhappy in their jobs as well. They are looking to us for guidance and instruction as to what they are supposed to do not having the faintest idea what GSO stands for...

Q: General Services Officer.

STOCKMAN: You can appreciate this situation. In the case of Tashkent there were a few extra demands made upon us there, which eventually started to tax everyone's perseverance and patience. That was security requirements. The building was not in any shape or form whereby we could walk off in the evening and leave it unattended. We literally had to become Marine Security Guards there after hours. So we set up rosters. Everyone took their fair share. In other words from six in the evening until six in the morning we had American presence on the property. You did your fair share and there were only seven or eight of us there so your duty came up pretty regularly.

There was another problem, the roof was leaking on this new building and it had to be repaired. Well, from a security point of view you can not let a lot of foreign workers on the top of the embassy unattended or unaccompanied. So we had to climb up the side of the building in the hot sun, sit up there and roast with them and do duty on the roof. But not everybody could do this. Some had fear of heights and were afraid to go on the roof. So it seemed like you could not find enough time to do your real job, the job you were sent out there for.

And then too, I think, older, more experienced people realized that they would have to do a little bit more than they were sent out there to do. They have to be leaders. They have to show a little bit of initiative, motivation and all of those things you would expect of older people. Younger people, if they were not well prepared before coming out there, had to be baby sat. Then there was the language problem. Not everybody could speak Russian. So that became a problem. There were just many logistical problems. You would run out of this or that. Something as simple as a stapler, or paper for a laser jet printer. Something you would take for granted anywhere else. Or the fuses or lights would go and you couldn't find any replacements. This or that wouldn't work. Or the drivers would go off and disappear and leave you stranded at night. What do you do? Hitchhike, take the subway, or what? It was always something new. Or you would go to the airport to pick up some diplomatic pouches. No one had ever done this, so how do we do this? Or how do we pay for these pouches? No one knew how to do it. There was no form. They didn't know how much to charge you for excess baggage. Every time you turned there was a new problem or new question that nobody could answer and therefore nothing happened. And on and on it went.

I would say that most could enjoy the challenge for about six weeks and then a combination of things would start to set in and you would say, “Well, how many more days do I have to go?” And maybe the next person who came in would have a few more answers. But you kept looking for continuity, but you wouldn't always find it. I think it was

painful in the administrative cone. The other officers...there was usually only one officer for each responsibility and some officers had to double up doing political/econ reporting. Those who were qualified in languages had extra duties because they had to help be interpreters all the time and their patience would get thin some times.

But I think overall most people seriously enjoyed the challenge, but they knew that the only way to get this off the ground eventually was to get a permanent party cadre established there, and that was not easy to do.

Q: Well then you went to Georgia, to Tbilisi. Now I assume a great deal that you said about Tashkent applied to Tbilisi. Could you talk about what was different...How are we doing on time?

STOCKMAN: We are getting pretty late now.

Q: Okay.

Q: This is October 15. Dick, could you follow through. In other words you went to Tbilisi when?

STOCKMAN: The trip to Tbilisi was about the same time last year.

Q: So we are talking around October, 1992. You went into some detail about how things were in Tashkent, what was different in Tbilisi?

STOCKMAN: I think just about everything was different in Tbilisi in a sense that Tashkent seemed to be a template of Moscow in many respects, whereas Georgia was very much Georgian, not only in the topography, the weather, but I think more importantly in the people, their independent nature. As we know right now the armed conflict has really not settled down. No thanks to the Russians taking sides surprisingly in a kind of unappreciative way towards Shevardnadze, but I guess maybe that is predictable too. It was basically from the very start a much different trip. The simple logistics of getting into

Tbilisi, which is a very poverty stricken country today, with, I think, very limited resources. Almost the entire infrastructure of the country seems to be coming to a grinding halt.

Transportation, for example. We had to wait in Vienna, Austria because the plane was delayed twelve hours. It is a very unique arrangement that the Austrians have with the government of Georgia to ferry people back and forth. Due to the severe lack of fuel of all kinds for both heating and transportation, but particularly transportation, flights in and out of Tbilisi are limited to once a week, on Saturdays, or at least they were at that time. I doubt that things have improved a year later. At any rate the Austrians had built two marvelous four star hotels, one in Tbilisi, Georgia and the other one up in the Caucus Mountains. They seem to have a monopoly on the tourist industry there, what little there is. Basically they would be catering to rich Europeans and other Westerners who ski and want to get away to a unique romantic type of place. At any rate they also have locked into this hotel arrangement, one charter flight a week, which is a small Aeroflot type plane which carries both cargo and people once a week on Saturdays. That is how we managed to get in there in October.

In the course of that two and a half months of TDY there it was very interesting. By the contrast the Georgian people are very lively. They are well known for their dancing, their culture, their songs, their history and likewise their food, at least in the times when it was plentiful. They are marvelous entertainers. They will offer 50 toasts a night at any Georgian table to which one would be invited. And yet, it is very sad to be there because you can see the strong, horrible evidence of a civil war that took place right in the heart of Tbilisi where very selectively key government buildings were literally destroyed in the civil war which took place I believe December, January, February of say late 1991, early 1992. Consequently it is almost a miracle that anything of any real importance was left in tact and that Shevardnadze could still run a government. But apparently they did have new parliamentary elections some time in early or mid 1992. His fledgling government was trying to hang on when I arrived there in October, November and December. Consequently what one was able to do in terms of getting a real look at

the country was somewhat limited and by that I mean primarily because of very high risk security factors. Travel was or should have been restricted to daylight hours only. At night it was not uncommon to hear gunfire randomly all night long on and off throughout the city and therefore unnecessary travel was completely discouraged. All of us were housed in the four star hotel there at the time for lack of housing, with, I think, two exceptions. Two of the single female officers had found accommodations that were, I guess, adequate. But at any rate the city at night was extremely dark and dangerous and we were pretty much confined to the hotel. We did have a satellite dish on the balcony of my room, which we used for emergency communications after hours. There were numerous military flights, humanitarian assistance in a project called Project Hope, and the third or fourth flight was taking place during the time I was there.

But to answer your question, this would be somewhat of an explanation of the contrast between the two places.

Q: Could you explain the state of relations between Georgia and the United States? What were you doing and how were things working out?

STOCKMAN: Well, I think the relationship between the two governments, in light of recent past history with Shevardnadze, were probably as excellent as one could expect. Certainly I would imagine that we were doing everything possible to support him and to try and convince the people that this was a beginning, one in which we were quite interested and of course we were doing everything that could be done, piecemeal fashion, to begin to put things together.

One thing I noticed taking place there that I suppose has also happened in other countries out here, is that there was a team of international jurists there at the time. Apparently they were working together with the new government trying to give them some idea of how to start writing a new constitution. That would really be the first real fundamental legal step in establishing, I suppose, a new democracy that they were not accustomed to.

Q: For the historian later, what was the civil war about?

STOCKMAN: What little that I could piece together, apparently there were many, not unlike other CIS countries, many ethnic groups who, over perhaps decades and decades had their axes to grind. Perhaps family feuds, turf battles, political battles of whatever sort. I suppose if one uses a little imagination, and perhaps even reads Fitzroy McLean, a British diplomat's book, Eastern Approaches you could get a real feel for what Joseph Stalin did and the repercussions many years later. His mass deportation of ethnic groups to opposite ends of the Soviet Union obviously had its accumulative effect, in my opinion. I believe we are starting to see reaction to this purging, or ethnic cleansing or whatever you might call it.

Then the fact that he who was in power in the old system had all the perks. And those who were in power didn't want to leave it because it would probably mean a lost of an apartment, a car and all the things that went along with it. So there is a classless society in today's new democracy starting to show what power struggles really mean.

Q: Dick, how were we setting up our embassy at that time?

STOCKMAN: Well the embassy there in Tbilisi was certainly a very unique setup. The government had apparently pointed out one building in the early days and designated it as the most suitable for the US embassy. Apparently that was it, there were not many alternative choices. It was a very old, classical building. The very architecture of the building, quite honestly, did not make it very functional for diplomatic purposes. The ceilings were perhaps 20 feet high and it would be very difficult functionally to use all that space effectively, let alone to heat it in the wintertime, which we found out very quickly. The electrical wiring in the building was dilapidated. And yet you could see obvious signs that this was the equivalent of some ministry building with very ornate woodwork and doors, the high ceilings, the tapestry, expensive and old oil paintings in various places throughout the building. In some locations there were fireplaces. So with a little

imagination you could just about picture the old establishment, perhaps even the last days of the Tsar, living the life of Riley. And, of course, that came to a quick end.

Q: Who was our Ambassador while you were there?

STOCKMAN: Kent Brown.

Q: Was he an experienced Soviet hand?

STOCKMAN: Well, I understand that most all of these Ambassadors at one time or another were very experienced Soviet hands. I did not know any of them personally not having served in the Soviet Union or behind the Iron Curtain. But I would certainly say he and his wife were probably two of the most charming people and in my opinion expertly chosen to be ambassador and leaders for a new embassy. They were really, really appreciated by all the embassy staff. And the team loyalty that they had generated was showing obvious results there. Because it is a difficult post in many respects to work in and yet the morale seemed very, very high for obvious reasons, they had very strong leadership.

Q: How was it communicationswise?

STOCKMAN: The commo set up was pretty much the same as it is in all of these embassies. It was effective. The Achilles heel to all of it, of course, is the city power that we rely upon...most of these embassies that don't have real true generators that we need for emergencies, during power failures in the city... for all practical purposes the telephone installation there and the communications gear was very effective. Thank god.

Q: Well, you were there for how long?

STOCKMAN: Two and a half months.

Q: Was there any consideration because of the fighting that they might close it down again?

STOCKMAN: At that point in time I don't think there was any such consideration. There was not actually out right civil war in the city during the time I was there. There were factions, of course, that were doing their thing at nighttime, primarily gun running and smuggling I suppose of all kinds. Of course the lack of fuel kept that to a minimum too. The real true fighting was up in the one corner of the country where they are having the secessionist effort, I believe the Russians are backing to some extent. It did make you feel nervous because after all you came out of the hotel in the morning and you would see the ground covered with shell casings on the street and you could hear it at night. Sometimes umpteen animals would come strolling into the hotel, the lobby, with their automatic weapons, somewhat drunk. So anything could have happened without any advanced notice. So you had to keep your wits about you and look and observe and literally stay out of trouble or avoid it.

Q: Well then let's move to the Kyrgyz Republic where you are now on a temporary assignment. Were you here when we first set this place up?

STOCKMAN: No. My first visit here was this year in July and August.

Q: When was it set up?

STOCKMAN: Well, I believe it was one of the very first. I recall seeing it on the front of State Magazine and would guess that was probably in early 1992. There was a large group of us who were recruited in the spring of that year, retired annuitants, to help alleviate the personnel shortages. We eventually got out into the field...most of us went into Moscow and then fanned out over the various CIS countries. This was in May and June, 1992. So I think the few embassies which were able to get open and staffed quickly probably did so in early 1992.

Q: How did you find Kyrgyzstan different from the other places?

STOCKMAN: Well, in this situation here...I am particularly fond of Kyrgyzstan. The people are marvelous. I have learned an awful lot in being able to talk with the people about their culture. One can visit a museum that is full of antiquities and historical artifacts. It is very accessible. It shows you a very, very sharp contrast with their historical past up to and including 70 years of communism, all within the same museum. So if that is your thing, it is available here. But I would say equally importantly is that fact that one can freely talk to the Kyrgyz people here and get a perspective...this is all in English, of course...of their country and traditions and still get a balanced feel for their patience and tolerance of other ethnic groups, particularly the Russians. I think that really shows a great deal of maturity on their part which may not be the case in many of the other republics. I believe that is really going to be their strongest trump that will really attract US support. And they may make progress far faster than the others. But there are numerous reasons why Bishkek is very enjoyable.

Q: What have been the greatest changes in the communications field since you came into the Service?

STOCKMAN: Looking back over almost 30 years, I first entered the communications business, which was in the Vietnam era...I was drafted into the US Army and working radio teletype, Morse code communications on Rhein Main Air Base, and in late 1966 I came on board with State expecting to do somewhat the same things. I was a little bit surprised when that was not the case, for various reasons. Nevertheless, looking at the overall state of the art, I would say that we have made astronomical advances in the technology, the management, the budget, the staffing, just about every possible aspect of running this professional cone within State. Most of these dramatic changes have really taken place starting with the appearance of what we call the TERP equipment, which was the beginning of computerization in communications in early to mid 1970s. I think we have made phenomenal progress in an extremely short time thanks to a very generous budget.

Q: Is there a difference between the communications person today than there was...when you came in you said you were part of a new wave which was basically to replace mostly women who had been with State during the war where the male communicators ended up in the military. Is there a different type person who is a communicator now than when you came in?

STOCKMAN: Oh, I think definitely so. The average person who was recruited in the mid-sixties and for a period of at least 10 or 12 years to follow was well trained in one branch of the military or another in communications. It was an outright prerequisite to be hired by State to have prior military service in the business. That was all fine and good. Unfortunately, very little progress was made and many of the skills that were recruited with were lost there for a period of time simply because of the way we did business during that period of time about the mid 70's. Of course at some point in all of this business you have technology and personnel and I think that is your question. To answer that question I would say that the person who is recruited today is far better educated, more roundly educated to a higher degree the in the past. Does this make the individuals who are recruited or selected better trained, better prepared? I think today you would probably use the word information management specialist because today is far better we are really looking at systems more than we are components or individual installations. When you look at this whole business on a global or regional scale, you have to have individuals who are able to visualize, to be extremely versatile and flexible and to be able to meet the requirements. I think the overall individual recruited is far superior in many respects.

Q: Are there many women coming back?

STOCKMAN: Yes.

Q: Because when you said you were just going to the military, there wouldn't be very many women available.

STOCKMAN: There were very few women who I ever came in contact with in the military communications field. Perhaps it was just the places where I was assigned.

To round this up I would say that overall there is a much better balance in both management and in the newest recruited persons, men and women. Certainly their backgrounds come from all types of information management, private industry, government, etc. The individual who is recruited basically is, I suppose expecting far greater achievements in a much quicker pace then we did in our day. I think we were more patient. We were to some extent more disciplined. I think the individual who is recruited today is a different breed of individual. They seem to be very independent, know pretty much what they want out of life, they are perhaps a lot more democratic and understanding. So one his past experience and somehow merge it into today's working environment. Yet we are the bridge, so to speak, of transition from the past to the present and somehow one has to assist and help the new people.

Q: One last question on this Dick, at one point I was with the Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service talking to people who were coming out of various other cones to become regular Foreign Service officers in the political, economic and administrative fields. I had several people who came out of the communications side. I was struck by the fact that they might have been doing communications but the really weren't very interested in the political environment where they were. Now talking to you it is very obvious for anybody reading this conversation that you were interested in the political environment. But I would get a hold of people who said, “That is not my business. I am hear to send messages back and forth.” A very narrow view which may have reflected the military background they may have been coming from...you did your job and that was that. I would think one would have to be interested in what was happening in Bishkek and the people in order to survive some of these difficult countries. Do you find a different in the people you are getting as far as that sort of thing?

STOCKMAN: Well, I think you have hit the nail right on the head with this question. I believe that the real challenge for the new Foreign Service, the more democratized Foreign Service, is the administration of personnel actions and assignments, etc. and even at a post of a small size, for the post management to be able to survive and make it work, is going to be in understanding this difference not only in personalities but with the focus, for example, in communications, to integrate that person into the country team effort. Things have to change from the way they were in the past. I saw very dramatic examples of this in a very effective way through the invitation of the ambassador, for example, Ronald Palmer in Lome, Togo. He was excellent in doing this. Also Nancy Rawls at that time. They would be classic examples, there were others. In Riyadh, for example, one would participate very actively. Ottawa was probably the best example of current modern day integration of all staff members into country team meetings and specialized meetings the Ambassador held for administrative officers.

Q: This was Tom Niles was it?

STOCKMAN: No, but I can't remember right off hand who it was.

But the point to make is just this. Some individuals like to practice what we call the green door syndrome. Hide behind the door under the protection of the security umbrella and not come out of the cave, so to speak. Many individuals find that very repulsive and disagreeable and certainly in the case of young married people it is very disagreeable and certainly ostracizes them, and particularly the wife. It makes for a very difficult life and one not very enjoyable.

My own feelings I think it is what you make it. If you show your true colors you will be accepted. If you make the extra effort you will be accepted. If you reciprocate on a small scale I think you will also be accepted. Again, in the past, there were several efforts made in developing an upward mobility program. I tried on a couple of occasions to get more experience in administration. I didn't succeed, but maybe it happened for a reason.

Q: Well, one never knows, like the Sinai thing. Well, Dick I want to thank you very much. It has been great.

STOCKMAN: It has been very enjoyable.

End of interview